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Utah War

The Utah War (1857-58) began as a result of religious tensions inspired by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see MORMONISM). Since the formation of the Utah Territory in 1850, some federal appointees and non-Mormon (Gentile) settlers had complained of political domination and abuse of Gentiles by the Mormon majority and Governor Brigham YOUNG. A Mormon religious revival—"the reformation"—and Gentile opposition to polygamy heightened tensions still more. Finally, President James Buchanan sent (May 1857) 2,500 troops of the U.S. Army to replace Young and enforce federal authority. In the hysteria that followed, Mormons participated in an Indian attack—the MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE of September 1857—in which 120 Gentiles were killed. Fearing reprisal, Mormon leaders sent out forces to destroy the army's supplies, thus delaying its arrival in Utah until the summer of 1858. By then, conciliation had prevented any clash of arms.

Elliott West

Bibliography: Hafen, L. R., and A. W., eds., *The Utah Expedition, 1857-58* (1958; repr. 1983); Roberts, Brigham H., *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 6 vols. (1930; repr. 1959).